

Moddersville Reformed Church celebrates 100th

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MODDERSVILLE -- Lizing the theme "Little is ch... en God is in it," mbe... of the congregation friends of the Moddersville Reformed Church celebrated 100 years of service in Christ weekend.

Festivities began Friday evening with "A Trip Down Memory Lane," as past and sent members of the church red fond memories of their es together. Several recalled v Morris and Nina Reames, rmer owners of the ddersville Store, would bring k-and-white peppermint dies to be distributed among children, who always hered 'round the couple's t in church.

None were there who could all first-hand the humble innings of their church in the cabin of Wyrrant Modders, who Moddersville was ned. None could remember, heir own accord, the spring 1891, when the people of mor... Vogel Center and

Moddersville petitioned the then Grand River Classis for support, and Reverend Jeldersma was sent to organize a church.

So it was that a church of the Reformed faith was started to serve the three communities. By that time, services were being conducted in the log school building in Moddersville for several years. None could remember first-hand, but all shared in the rich heritage of their faith.

They shared in the memories of good times and bad. In 1894, the entire year's collection amounted to just \$30.70. Still, the congregation agreed that no lotteries or similar such methods would be used to raise money to fund church activities. Through the 1890s, the church members struggled to make ends meet, losing Reverend Venema due to lack of income. But the lack of funds resulted from the difficult times, not any lack of generosity on the part of the congregation. In those years, a pound of butter sold for 10 cents, while a yard of calico or muslin could be purchases for just 5 cents.



The original Moddersville Church, built in 1915 and costing approximately \$217.

In May 1915, a petition bearing the signatures of 10 men and their wives from Falmouth was presented, asking that the signatories be allowed to form their own church in Falmouth. The request was granted.

On June 19, 1915, after the group from Moddersville elected Ryk Rickson Elder, Isaac Young Deacon, and appointed the two and J. Tibbe to their building committee, the congregation authorized execution of a bond to the Reformed Church Board of Domestic Missions to secure a \$400 loan. That summer, volunteers gathered, materials were purchased, and the Moddersville Reformed Church was built.

Though many improvements have occurred in the years since, the same names have continued to fill the congregation's roll -- Beerens, Tibbe, Talsma, Vanderwal, Herweyer, Reames, Spitsbergen, Luetzinger, Gruenberg and Young -- to name just a few. Much of the materials and labor required for those improvements were volunteered, as were many of the furnishings that continue to grace the interior of the church.

During the "Down Memory Lane" visit, discussion of a verse memorizing contest in 1948 began. A woman arrived in Moddersville bearing gifts -- gifts she agreed to exchange with the children of the church who could commit the most Bible verses to memory. Dorothy (Wyma) Everett remembered the contest well.

Dorothy, it seemed, had her heart set on a beautiful plaque bearing the words "Jesus Cares." All that summer, she sat beneath the shady trees of her parent's farm, committing verses to memory. When the results were announced, however, it was one Leon Gruenberg who'd learned the most verses, and Dorothy had to settle for an anchor-shaped thermometer.

Last Friday, as friends recalled the contest, Dorothy couldn't help but share the disappointment she'd felt in not winning the plaque. At that moment, Marv Gruenberg, Leon's brother, stood, saying

"I've got something for you," and walking out to his car. When he returned, Marv presented Dorothy with the very plaque, explaining, while cleaning out his barn, he'd come across it in a box of old momentos. (He was living in the Tibbe farm.)

Saturday's activities began with a pig roast on the church grounds, which included all manner of dishes to pass, games for the children and rides in a vintage, 1929 antique car for those married 50 years or more. Of course, several others in attendance availed themselves of the opportunity to ride in the beautiful old car.

Saturday evening saw the Centennial Musicales, which featured a trumpet solo by Amy Van Haitsma, a song presented by no less than three generations of the Vanderwal family and songs from both the church's childrens and adult choirs.

Sunday morning saw the large congregation gather for a very special worship presided over by Rev. Gayle Wilson, who was joined by former Moddersville Rev. Louis Harvey. Rev. Harvey, who drove 550 miles to be a part of the Centennial Celebration, proclaimed "Every mile was worth it."

During the service, Jan and daughter Jill Frandsen offered a beautiful duet. Music Director Andrea Wheeler played the flute, accompanied by her father, J. Rodney Wendell on the piano. Jennifer Gruenberg also played the flute, accompanying the church choir in the song "They Shall Soar Like Eagles."

At 11:57 a.m., Rev. Wilson began his sermon, which usually ends at noon.

"If my memory serves me correctly, in about three minutes, a number of watches will go 'beep, beep,'" said Rev. Wilson. "That's okay. I'm preparing you for the fact we won't be out at noon."

Rev. Wilson combined services for the children and the adults, focusing, in both instances, on the theme "To Win the Prize." Rev. Wilson told those in attendance the Moddersville congregation had

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